HOMEMAKERS' CHAT
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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: "Home Economics Research Helps Win the War" - Information from home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Among the war medals awarded these days, I havent't heard of any being given to homemakers for a job well done on the home front.

But Dr. Hazel K. Stiebeling, Chief of the Federal Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics pays tribute to these unsung heroines in the family circle in her annual report just off the press. Let me read you a little of what she says:

"Since the onset of the war the Nation's families have met their food problems in a remarkably forthright way."

"Increased purchasing power has, of course, helped raise dietary levels by enabling many families to buy more of needed 'protective' foods. Rationing has given every family its chance at the scarcer foods. Enrichment has put within reach of the household buyer white bread and refined flour with certain vitamins and iron added.

"But when this war's food history is written, much credit for improved diets will justly go to the families in town and country for the hard work, good grace, and firm determination with which they turned to and produced more of their own food. They also preserved more fresh food...and conserved food values through better care and cooking. Thus they helped change what might have been a serious drop in the nutritive quality of family meals into an upward trend."

Dr. Stiebeling points out that many of these wartime achievements would have been impossible without the help of facts developed through scientific research. But she also makes clear that facts alone would have been of no avail if the women of the nation had not put them to practical use in such ways as: Planning the Victory garden to provide tomatoes rich in Vitamin C, and green and yellow vegetables rich in Vitamin A..... Canning fruits and

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vegetables so as to save food values and prevent spoilage...Caring for household equipment to keep it lasting for the duration...and converting old clothes into warm wearable garments to help ease the clothing shortage.

Besides research aimed to help the homemaker with problems of wartime living, the home economics Bureau has carried on studies in what you might call basic science.

One of these has to do with the protein in foods--or to be more exact, the chemistry of protein.

For a long time food chemists have known that protein is made up of amino-acids --nearly two dozen of them as a matter of fact. And studies have also shown that 8 of these amino-acids are essential to our proper nutrition. But since many foods contain protein--and different combinations of these amino-acids in the protein--it has been a long slow process to find just which foods we could depend on for our protein supply, in case of emergency.

This year protein chemists in the Department of Agriculture developed new short -cut methods for finding certain of the amino-acids in our foods. They can accomplish now in a few days what it took weeks to do before.

So before long, as homemakers we'll be hearing much more about how to combine different foods to get high-quality, efficient protein from inexpensive foods.

One result already apparent from this research is that the protein of peanuts and wheat supplement each other remarkably well. So if you can't get meat, or cheese, or fish for sandwich fillings, you can rest assured that the peanut butter sandwich is doing an equally good job on the protein side.

Well, some of this may have sounded pretty technical. But it gives you an idea of what has to go on behind the scenes before food specialists can make recommendations on what foods we need to eat to keep well fed. And the same painstaking research is going on in other fields of home economics...to help win the war on the home front.

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